

What is claimed is:

1. A method for collecting data from a hand held computer and transmitting the data to a data center, the method comprising the steps of:

10 receiving a first data set, while the independent hand held computer is operating in an off-line mode;

storing the first data set, in response to a determination that the receipt of the first data set is complete;

15 establishing a communication link with data center, in response to a determination that the independent handheld computer has been functionally connected to the data center, thereby placing the independent hand held computer in an on-line mode;

transmitting the first data set to the data center, while the independent handheld computer is operating in an on-line mode.

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2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of transmitting a second data set from the data center to the independent hand held computer, while the independent computer is operating in an on-line mode.

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3. The method of Claim 2, wherein the second data set is a standard order.

30 4. The method of Claim 2, wherein the second data set is a program module.

5 5. The method of Claim 2, wherein the data center receives the second data set from a remote data processing system.

6. The method of Claim 5, wherein the data center is further operative to transmit the first data set to a remote data processing system.

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7. The method of Claim 1, wherein the functional connection between the hand held computer and the data center is a telephone connection.

8. The method of Claim 1, wherein the functional connection
15 between the hand held computer and the data center is an internet connection.

9. The method of Claim 6, wherein the data center is functionally connected to the remote data processing center over a telephone connection.

20 10. The method of Claim 6, wherein the data center is functionally connected to the remote data processing center over an internet connection.

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5 11. A method for automatically establishing a connection between
a hand-held computer and a remote computer, the method comprising the steps
of:

 making a determination that the hand-held computer has been
functionally connected to a cradle;

10 establishing a telephonic connection between the remote computer and
the hand held computer, in response to the determination that the hand-held
computer has been functionally connected to a cradle; and

 enabling the transmission of data between the hand-held computer and
the remote computer, in response to a determination that the telephonic
15 connection has been established.

 12. The method of Claim 11, wherein the determination that the
hand-held computer has been functionally connected to the cradle comprises
monitoring a hand-held presence detector.

20 13. The method of Claim 11, wherein the cradle has a modem that
is operative to perform the step of establishing the telephonic connection with
the remote computer.

25 14. The method of Claim 11, wherein the remote computer is a data
center.

 15. The method of Claim 14, further comprising the step of
transmitting the data set from the remote computer to an automated
30 distribution system.

5 16. The method of Claim 15, wherein the automated distribution system is operative to convert the data set into an order and to schedule the delivery of at least one item to a location associated with the hand-held computer.

10 17. The method of Claim 11, wherein the remote computer is a remote data processing system.

18. A method for collecting data representing an order, comprising:
storing a standard order, the standard order comprising a
15 plurality of item identifiers and corresponding quantities;
presenting each item identifier in association with the corresponding quantity for order confirmation; and
placing an order for a first item identifier and a first
corresponding quantity, in response to a determination that the first item
20 identifier and a first corresponding quantity have been confirmed;
wherein each of the plurality of item identifiers also has a corresponding locale value and wherein the first item identifier and the first corresponding quantity are presented for order confirmation in a sequence in relation to a second item identifier and a second corresponding quantity, based
25 on the relative values of a first locale value and a second locale value.

19. A data collection system for collecting, storing, and transmitting a data set, comprising:
an independent hand-held computer operative to receive the
30 data set;
a cradle operative to transmit the data set to a data center, when functionally connected to the independent hand-held computer; and

5 the data center operative to receive the data transmission from
the independent hand-held computer and to store the data set;

 wherein the independent hand-held computer receives the data
set while operating in an off-line mode and transmits the data set to the data
center while operating in an on-line mode.

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20. The data collection system of Claim 19, wherein the hand held
computer operates in an on-line mode in response to a determination that a
telephone connection has been established

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